

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-02 SP-02 PM-04

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R 260747Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6797

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USMISSION USUN

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 1800

CINCPAC FOR POLAND

SUMMARY: UNDP REPRESENTATIVE, WHILE INSPECTING LOCUST DAMAGE TO RICE CROP IN NORTHERN LAOS, WAS TOLD BY LPDR OFFICIAL THAT THE VIETNAMESE LAST YEAR HAD CEASED GIVING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO LAOS IN SUCH CASES SINCE LAOS HAD A RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENT IN VIENTIANE AND WAS THEREFORE ABLE TO MAKE WORLD-WIDE AID APPEALS. JULY 21 A UNDP/FAO AGRICULTURAL TEAM COMPLETED A THREE DAY TRIP TO THE NORTHERN TIP OF LUANG PRABANG PROVINCE TO INSPECT DAMAGE DONE BY THE LOCUST AND CATERPILLAR PLAGUE. AS A RESULT OF THE TRIP, THE OFFICIALS ARE ASKING FOR FAO EMERGENCY FUNDS TO IMMEDIATELY PROVIDE TEN TONS OF INSECTICIDE AND 400 MANUAL DISPENSERS AND FOR REGULAR FAO FUNDS TO ESTABLISH A LONG TERM PLANT-PROTECTION PROJECT IN LAOS. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE STRESSED TO GUARDA THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DESIRES ALL AID FOR THIS PROJECT TO BE CHANNELED THROUGH THE UNDP/FAO AS MULTILATERAL AID. GUARDA BELIEVES NEITHER THE SOVIETS NOR THE PRC WERE APPROACHED BY THE LAO FOR FUNDING IN THIS PROJECT. GUARDA REPORTS OBSERVING A

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PRC CONSTRUCTED HIGHWAY AND SEVERAL CONVOYS OF TRUCKS

WITH CHINESE WRITING ON THE SIDES. END SUMMARY.

1. UNDP REPRESENTATIVE ROGER GUARDA, FAO SOIL SPECIALIST, J. ROMANGNOLI, AND FAO PLANT-PROTECTION EXPERT, REDDY, WHO IS BASED IN BANGKOK, RETURNED JULY 21 FROM A THREE DAY INSPECTION EXPEDITION TO LUANG PRABANG CITY, MUANG NGOI AND MUANG KHOUA. IN NORTHERN LUANG PRABANG PROVINCE. THE TEAM FOUND SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE HIGHLAND RICE CROP IN MUANG KHOUA AND MUANG NGOI DESTROYED BY LOCUST AND CATERPILLARS. FAO EXPERTS EXPLAIN THE PEST POPULATION MULTIPLIED AS A RESULT OF LACK OF RAIN DURING CRITICAL PERIOD IN BREEDING CYCLE. DESPITE THE SPARE POPULATION AND NORMALLY SMALL CROP PRODUCTION THIS AREA, COMPARED TO SOME OTHER REGIONS IN LAOS, THE TEAM FELT IT WAS A SIGNIFICANT DISASTER FOR AREA SUBSISTENCE FARMERS. ON RETURNING TO VIENTIANE, THE TEAM IMMEDIATELY CABLED FOR FAO EMERGENCY FUNDS TO PROVIDE TEN TONS OF INSECTICIDES AND 400 MANUAL DISPENSERS. SECONDLY, THEY REQUESTED A PLAN-PROTECTION PROJECT FOR LAOS UNDER WHICH FAO WOULD PROVIDE A TEAM OF EXPERTS AND AN INITIAL FORTY TONS OF INSECTICIDES. THE LPDR WOULD BE EXPECTED TO MAINTAIN THE PROJECT ONCE ESTABLISHED. IT COULD BE USED TO CONTROL LOCALIZED PEST PROBLEMS SUCH AS THE RICE STALK WORM CURRENTLY PLAGUING CROP IN THE VIENTIANE PLAIN. PADDY CROP IN THE VIENTIANE PLAIN AND ELSEWHERE IN LAOS IS ALSO THREATENED THIS YEAR BY AN UNUSUALLY DRY RAINY SEASON.

2. GUARDA, A BELGIAN NATIONAL, BELIEVED THAT HE AND ROMAGNOLI, AN ITALIAN, WERE THE FIRST WESTERNERS TO MAKE AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THIS AREA IN NORTHERN LAOS SINCE 1962. (REDDY IS AN INDIAN.) GUARDA TOLD CONSUL THAT HE SAW WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS A PRC CONSTRUCTED DOUBLE-LANE, PAVED HIGHWAY ONE METER THICK AND THAT HE SAW SEVERAL CONVOYS OF TRUCKS WITH CHINESE WRITING ON THE SIDES TRAVELING ON THE HIGHWAY. PRC BICYCLES AND RUBBER SHOES WERE AMONG THE FEW MANUFACTURED GOODS HE OBSERVED. GUARDA DID NOT RECOGNIZE ANY FOREIGN SOLDIERS BUT NOTED A FAIR NUMBER OF LPDR UNIFORMS. HE

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DESCRIBED THE VILLAGERS AS PROSPEROUS AND MORE CHEERFUL THAN THE VIENTIANE LAO. THE ONLY REMNANTS OF WAR HE NOTED WERE THE CHINESE AMMUNITION BOXES USED FOR STORAGE, AND WHAT HE SAID WERE AMERICAN BOMB SHELL CASINGS AROUND HOUSE PILES.

3. AS EVIDENCE OF THE POOR COMMUNICATION SYSTEM IN LAOS TODAY, A CESSNA FROM VIENTIANE HAD TO BE SENT TO

PAKSANE TO FETCH TO VIENTIANE THE HELICOPTER THAT TRANSPORTED THE TEAM NORTH. THE THREE UNDP/FAO OFFICIALS WERE ACCOMPANIED FROM VIENTIANE BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND THE DIRECTOR OF LAO AGRICULTURE EXTENSION. IN LUANG PRABANG THEY WERE JOINED BY AN OFFICIAL FROM THE LP PREFECTURE.

4. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE KHAMSOUK SAIGNASENG MADE CLEAR TO GUARDA THE LAO DESIRE THAT ALL AID FOR THIS PROJECT BE FUNNELED THROUGH UNDP/FAO AS MULTI-LATERAL AID. GUARDA BELIEVED THE LAO HAVE NOT APPROACHED THE PRC OR SOVIETS FOR AID IN THIS PROJECT. ANOTHER MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE OFFICIAL TOLD GUARDA THAT UP UNTIL ONE YEAR AGO NORTH VIETNAM HAD GIVEN AID IN EMERGENCIES OF THIS SORT. THE OFFICIAL SAID VIETNAMESE CURRENT POLICY, HOWEVER, IS TO DENY SUCH AID TO LAOS WHICH AS AN INDEPENDENT COUNTRY, CAN NOW SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER SOURCES.
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